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Analysis - " Out Out" by Robert Frost

In Robert Frost's Poem " Out Out," the experience of a young boy getting his hand sawn off and dying is described in agonizing and beautiful detail.

Working out in the field, the young boy experiences fear, denial and a myriad other emotions as the harsh circumstances of life remove from him his hand and his life. The literary effects and form of " Out Out" are woven together to convey the message that tragic events in life are unexpected and often brutal, and that people have different reactions to death.

The literary effects of " Out Out" are used to lend a grandeur to this relatively mundane existence, as well as convey the helplessness that the boy feels as his own demise is somewhat out of his control. Imagery is used as a significant component of Frost's writing in the poem - the " stove-length sticks of wood" and " five mountain ranges one behind the other" help to paint a vivid portrait of the idyllic setting where this tragic event takes place. The tone of the poem is incredibly descriptive and powerful, as repetition is used to great effect to demonstrate just how often death occurs. The buzz saw is repeatedly described as having " snarled and rattled," providing figurative language to demonstrate the danger that the tool represents, especially when contrasted with the beautiful imagery of the Vermont countryside. The tone of the poem fluctuates between cool, calculated language and panic when the boy speaks - with his yelling of " Don't let him cut my hand off!" the reader gets a better indicator of the understated horror of his loss with the dispassionate description of his injury and later death.

The use of these devices in Frost's poem show how the personal tragedies we encounter are insignificant in the grand scheme of things.

The form of " Out Out" also contributes to the feeling of inevitability and the inexorable forward movement of life, even after death. The poem is written in iambic pentameter, which provides a nice, flowing rhythm to the language. The regular, consistent accents on syllables consistent with this particular form allows for the poem to constantly chug along, offering the same consistent rhythm as the flow of time. The lines are usually the same length, which makes some of the more truncated lines - " Under the sunset far into Vermont" and " So. The hand was gone already" - have more impact. In the latter line, the reader feels the boy's understated shock and terror at the loss of his hand, which indicates the inevitability and commonality of these events that are personally tragic to the boy.

In conclusion, the varying uses of literary effects and form of " Out Out" offer a unique perspective on death and dying in the context of a child facing his own demise. The literary effects of the poem allow this small rural working-class boy's story to have a degree of weight, even as it is shown that death is insignificant by proxy. Furthermore, the iambic pentameter and interrupted rhythm of the poem itself indicates the inevitability of death and the march of time. Robert Frost uses these techniques to paint a poignant and tragic portrait of a boy whose life is cut short, and the people who are left behind as a result.